



While Angie Hong with the East Metro Water Resource Education Program did not participate on the panel, her answers to the panelist questions, and lessons learned, are below.

Panelists, in regards to public participation in watershed management planning and implementation name and describe a program, event, meeting or other public participation "endeavor" you have implemented that was extremely successful. Please tell us about the name of the program include when it was held, the format, the reason and content of the program, how you went about promotion, and the outcome, impact, or input attained. In covering all these points - share with us what went well and why? What tools or advice can you offer all of us to get lots of public participation?

A year ago I was contacted by the Stillwater Rotary, whose members were interested in learning more about water resource issues in the St. Croix Valley and how they could get involved to make a difference. I first met with their volunteer action subcommittee and gave them an overview of issues and where I saw the best opportunity for the Rotary to become active. A month later, I presented to the whole membership (40-50 people) during their lunch meeting.

After the meeting and presentation, the Rotary decided to become a Blue Thumb partner and to help the City of Stillwater build a raingarden at the Historic County Courthouse. Several members contacted me individually to speak to other groups they are involved with and to inquire about planting raingardens and shoreline plantings at their own homes.

This public outreach effort was successful because I was able to tap into an already active group of citizens who were interested in making an impact, but in need of more information about water issues and actions they could take. We had an already existing program (Blue Thumb) for them to tap into and I gave them several suggestions for specific actions they could take. In my presentation I spoke about many problems facing the St. Croix River, but also talked about opportunities for change and gave success stories. Additionally, the topic was of local concern for the Rotary members.

Advice learned: Tap into existing social networks, especially people who are influential and involved in their communities. In addition to educating people about problems, also share success stories and simple, realistic ways for them to get involved and feel like they are making a difference.

In regards to the same program you just spoke about - or another one involving public participation, what did not work successfully? Share with us what didn't go well to achieve a successful public participation program? What would you tell all of us to avoid or not try?

Last spring, we decided to hold our annual SWPPP public meeting in conjunction with our annual tree pick-up at the county fairgrounds. The event was advertised as an open house, with an opportunity for people to stop by and learn about local water issues and how they could get involved. A press release was sent out in addition to a public notice in the papers. The day of the tree pick-up was freezing and our "open-house" was located inside an unheated building. People picking up trees left quickly, due to the weather, and no one attended just to learn about the SWPPP.

Advice learned: A press release is often insufficient to advertise an event. People are also influenced greatly by factors such as weather, convenience of the location, and day and time of the event. People may be less likely to attend a drop-in open house style event than a structured workshop that requires RSVP and/or payment, and thus feels more like an activity.

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